The Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey

Helen A. Moore - 1982 Study Director

The findings in this report are based on data collected in the sixth Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey (NASIS). This survey is part of an on-going study of the quality of life in Nebraska conducted by the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The sample for NASIS consists of 1907 respondents eighteen years of age or older residing in households in Nebraska. The sample is selected through a process called random digit dialing: within each three-digit prefix in the state, four-digit numbers are selected randomly from all possible four-digit numbers to complete the telephone number. Respondents are further chosen randomly from the adults in the household and interviewed by telephone by experienced, professional interviewers from the offices of the Bureau of Sociological Research. All interviewing was done between February and April of 1982. This procedure produces a high-quality, representative sample of Nebraska adults. Analysis shows the sample to be representative of the state on age, sex, race, and geographical distribution.

The interview averaged approximately 47 minutes and included questions about energy use, health, recreation, political attitudes, occupation, education, family life, and other matters reflecting the quality of life experienced in the state. For the entire sample, the chances are 95 in 100 that the true value for the population lies within a range equal to the reported survey percentage plus or minus 2.24 percent. This is an estimate of maximum error and for most items the percentages are likely to be even more accurate.

The data gathered by NASIS are used by a wide variety of State and local government agencies for policy and program planning and by faculty and students at the University of Nebraska and other colleges for research. No information identifying any respondent is released to any user and the strict confidentiality of individual respondents is rigidly enforced. While the final responsibility for the organization and structure of the survey and for reports produced under its name rests with the Bureau of Sociological Research, public agencies and University departments play an integral part in planning the survey through an Advisory Committee. Public organizations interested in membership on the Advisory Committee should contact the NASIS Study Director.

Funding for NASIS comes from the University of Nebraska, the Bureau of Sociological Research and State and local agencies which buy items and data analysis from the survey.

The NASIS surveys are repeated each year to measure changes in the quality of life in Nebraska. While there is a core of questions which is included every year, each survey has a large component of unique items which address specific topical issues. Plans for future years include reinterviewing the 1977 panel every two years to assess changes in their lives. Additional detail on the NASIS surveys regarding use of the survey data or cost of purchasing items on future surveys can be obtained by contacting the NASIS Study Director at the Bureau of Sociological Research or by sending for a copy of the 1983 NASIS Prospectus.

ATTITUDES TOWARD SOCIAL SECURITY

Several Social Security questions were developed for use in the 1982 Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey (NASIS). This paper compares the NASIS results with two different surveys concerning Social Security issues. The Social Security questions addressed the following issues: the program's purpose, the earnings test, taxes, confidence in the system, lowering benefits vs. increasing taxes, raising age for full retirement benefits vs. increasing taxes, ending Social Security, and voluntary participation.

The 1982 NASIS surveyed only Nebraskans, but its preliminary results are compared with results from two national surveys: a 1977 survey completed by Professor Gary Elred, and a 1979 survey completed by Peter D. Hart and Associates for the National Commission on Social Security, whose final report was published in March, 1981. The results from the three surveys are reviewed in the context of three major Social Security issues: purpose and philosophy, financing and public support.

Purpose and Philosophy of the Social Security Program

There is significant debate about the proper level of Social Security benefits. Some say benefits are too high, others believe they are too low. This is a particularly important issue in light of the Social Security program's current financial difficulties. The benefit level issue is of fundamental importance as it reflects attitudes about the purpose and philosophy of the Social Security program.

The 1977 Elred survey, the 1979 Hart survey, and the 1982 NASIS included statements related to the purpose and philosophy of the Social Security providing basic support benefits. Table 1 summarizes the specific questions and the responses.

The responses to the 1979 Hart survey indicate a strong national sentiment that Social Security should provide basic support, but that it does not. The responses to the 1977 Elred survey statement exhibit a degree of uncertainty about the program, but show some consistency with the Hart results since only 25% (13% + 7% + 5%) agreed to any extent with the statement that Social Security should provide only limited benefits. This result is consistent with the 34% supporting only limited benefits (statement "B") in the Hart survey.

The 1982 NASIS questions were designed to replicate the Hart survey "should be" question, except that statement "B" was shortened in order to avoid any response bias that might be caused by the length of the statement. The 1982 NASIS results are consistent with the Hart results in that a majority chose full basic benefits (statement "A"). However, it is only a slight majority and not as significant as the one in the Hart survey. It must be remembered that the 1982 NASIS represents the response of a sample of Nebraskans while the Hart survey represents the response of a sample of the whole country (although almost three years ealier).

In summary, the results of all three surveys reflect an attitude that Social Security should do more than just supplement other sources in meeting the basic needs of retired people, although it appears Nebraskans feel less strongly about this than the nation as a whole.

The other two "purpose and philosophy" questions from the 1982 NASIS addressed the issue of the earnings test. The earnings test reduces or eliminates Social Security benefits when a beneficiary has more than a specified level of earnings. The Hart survey did not address the issue of the earnings test. Results for the Elred survey and the 1982 NASIS are shown in Table 2.

The 1977 Elred results imply a very strong dislike for the earnings test. The results for the 1982 NASIS were not quite as strongly negative. The two 1982 NASIS earnings test questions show very consistent responses, with a slightly larger percentage supporting elimination of the test in both cases.

Financing of the Social Security Program

The financial situation of the Social Security program is at a crisis point for the short term, and in difficulty for the long term, unless some changes are made. To combat the short term crisis, federal interfund borrowing has been authorized, but all this does is buy time, and not much. A more permanent solution must cause either one or both of two basic changes: increase income to the trust funds or decrease outgo from the trust funds. To increase income, either Social Security taxes must be raised, or other sources of funding must be available. Funding from general revenue is a topic of significant controversy. A main argument of those against such funding is the fact that it may cause people to lose sight of what the program is costing. And, of course, when there is a federal deficit, where is the general revenue to use for funding Social Security? Thus, to increase income currently, the primary reasonable approach is to increase Social Security taxes, either through an increase in the rate or in the wage base. To decrease outgo, the only two options are to decrease administrative costs or to decrease benefits. The Social Security system has had a reputation of extremely low administrative costs. Unfortunately, this may be catching up with the program, as evidenced by recent articles about the antiquated record keeping system. In any case, it is unlikely that administrative costs can be reduced. Thus, the reasonable approach to reducing outgo is to reduce the value of benefits either directly or by deferring the time when they become payable.

The 1977 Elred survey, the 1979 Hart survey, and the 1982 NASIS included questions about the financial soundness of the program and the desirability of increasing taxes or delaying benefits. The results of Professor Elred's survey indicate a knowledge of the financial problem but an unwillingness to raise taxes. Table 3 summarizes these results.

The 1979 Hart survey results indicate some willingness to raise taxes rather than decrease or defer benefits, as indicated in Table 4. A majority still have a preference for increasing taxes, but there seems to be somewhat less aversion to raising the retirement age (as opposed to increasing taxes) than to lowering benefits (as opposed to increasing taxes).

The responses to the first 1982 NASIS question indicate a significant majority of Nebraskans are opposed to increasing Social Security taxes. The other two 1982 questions were very similar to the Hart survey questions discussed above. The 1982 NASIS results for those questions indicate an unwillingness to lower benefits (instead of increasing taxes) and somewhat more willingness to delay the age at which full retirement benefits are available (as opposed to increasing taxes).

Taken together, the responses to the three 1982 NASIS questions indicate an unwillingness on the part of Nebraskans to increase Social Security taxes or to reduce the value of benefits. A less scientific study of Nebraskans was completed by Representative Doug Bereuter of Nebraska's First Congressional District. The Bereuter survey included the following two questions: Increase the tax rates to provide additional funding for Social Security, Raise the retirement age for future Social Security recipients. The responses to the Bereuter survey questions reflect an attitude similar to that in the responses to the 1982 NASIS questions. However, responses to the second Bereuter survey question (raising retirement age) are split 50-50 while more 1982 NASIS respondents show opposition to this. Table 5 summarizes these results.

Public Support of the Program

As the financial difficulties of the Social Security program have become more critical and more widely known, public support of the Social Security program has become a significant issue. The 1977 Elred survey, the 1979 Hart survey, and the 1982 NASIS each included a question of support for abolishing the Social Security system. In addition, the Hart and NASIS surveys included questions on individual confidence in the system, and continued individual participation.

The Elred survey, the Hart survey, and the 1982 NASIS each reflected a reluctance on the part of the respondents to abolish Social Security (see Table 6). In both the national surveys, there is strong sentiment against abolishing the program, but there is still a significant percentage that strongly favors such action. The Nebraska sample indicates an even stronger sentiment against abolishing the program and only a small percent are strongly in favor of abolishing it. This is a somewhat surprising result given the recent publicity on the program's financial difficulties.

An indication of the level of public confidence in the program, as well as an indication of the public awareness of the difficult financial situation of the program, is reflected in the responses summarized in Table 7. As might be expected, both the 1979 Hart and 1982 NASIS survey results indicate a significantly greater amount of confidence on the part of those already retired or, in the case of the 1982 NASIS, those 65 and over, than those non-retired or under age 65.

The results also show, overall, a greater lack of confidence in the system on the part of the respondents to the 1982 NASIS than on the part of the respondents to the Hart survey. The difference may be due in part to a difference in the sample (Nebraska vs. national) and in part to a difference in

time - over the last couple of years the financial problems of the program have been almost continuously in the news.

Despite this significant lack of confidence, it should be kept in mind that both surveys indicated a strong sentiment against ending the program.

All three surveys addressed the issue of whether people would have opted out of the program if they had the choice. In all surveys, a strong majority would stay in Social Security, but the percentage that would get out is significant. In Nebraska, over 63 percent of respondents wished to stay in the program, but a full one-third would opt to "get out". Table 8 summarizes the results.

Conclusion

What does all this mean? In general, there appears to be a strong feeling among Nebraskans that Social Security should provide more benefits. There is a significant lack of confidence in funds being available for retirement, although there is also a strong sentiment for choosing to be in the system and an even stronger sentiment for not abolishing the system. One thing this possibly indicates is that Nebraskans and the national public are aware of the problems with the program, do not support ending the program, and thus should be willing to accept the measures necessary to correct the problems. However, as indicated in the financing section some are not willing to cut benefits or increase taxes. Perhaps what this really indicates is that the public still needs to be educated about the program - its philosophy and purpose, and what is necessary to correct the critical financial problems.

Compared to the national samples, the Nebraska sample seems to be less oriented toward a greater role for Social Security benefits, less negative

about the earnings test, have less confidence in funds being available for their benefits, and yet seem to be more strongly against abolishing the system. Of course, the timing of the surveys must be kept in mind (1977 vs. 1979 vs. 1982).

In concluding, it is appropriate to make these general observations about the value of survey results:

1. Results may be inaccurate because individuals may be misinformed or give intentionally misleading statements. Moreover, while the attitude of the general public is an important consideration, in an issue as complex as the Social Security program, public attitude should not necessarily be considered the primary determinant of change - qualified experts need to study the problems and provide solutions that are most equitable.
2. Despite the cautions indicated in 1, survey results are important as one element in the evaluation of the Social Security program and whether or not it is achieving its goal.

Table 1.

Percent Respondents in Agreement with Social Security Statements of Purpose: Comparison Across Three Surveys.

	1982 NASIS (N=949)	1979 HART* (N=1549)	1977 ELRED** (N=431)
Statement A:			
Social Security retirement benefits should provide enough money to meet the basic needs and obligations of retired people.	50.2	61.0	45.0
Statement B:			
Social Security retirement benefits should only supplement other sources of income so that retired people can meet their basic needs and obligations.	46.6	34.0	25.0
Undecided	3.2	5.0	30.0

*The 1979 Hart survey also asked which of the statements best describes the way the Social Security system actually works. Among respondents, only 22% felt that Social Security currently operates like statement "A", while 65% stated that it operates like statement "B", with 9% unsure and 4% stating that it operates in "Neither" format.

**The 1977 Elred survey was worded differently, with respondents asked whether they agreed or disagreed with this statement:

"Social Security should provide only 'basic' benefit amounts with each individual responsible for supplementing these payments through other means."

STRONGLY AGREE														STRONGLY DISAGREE
	1	13%	1	7%	1	5%	1	30%	1	28%	1	11%	1	6%	1	

UNCERTAIN - NEUTRAL

Table 2.

Respondent Attitudes Toward the Social Security Earnings Test.

	NASIS-82
Statement A:	
The earnings test should be eliminated because benefits have been "bought and paid for" and it is unfair to withhold benefits just because the recipient continued to work.	47.0%
Statement B:	
The earnings test should be maintained because benefits are to replace lost income and the earnings test provides a measure of whether loss of income has occurred.	45.3%
Neither "A" Nor "B"	1.8%
Not Sure	5.9%

	STRONGLY FAVOR	SOMEWHAT FAVOR	SOMEWHAT OPPOSE	STRONGLY OPPOSE
1982 NASIS				
Earnings test be eliminated for people age 65 and over.	28.0	20.1	25.9	18.5

1977 ELRED

Social Security payments should not be reduced to persons over 65 who choose to work

STRONGLY AGREE				UNCERTAIN - NEUTRAL			STRONGLY DISAGREE
51%	23%	4%	2%	1%	6%	13%	

Table 3.

Attitudes Toward Social Security Financing from 1977

Eired National Survey (N=431).

1. THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM IS FINANCIALLY SOUND.

STRONGLY AGREE							STRONGLY DISAGREE
1	2%	3%	7%	16%	16%	30%	26%
			UNCERTAIN - NEUTRAL				

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2. EMPLOYEE PAYROLL SOCIAL SECURITY TAXES SHOULD BE INCREASED TO HELP FINANCE SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT PAYMENTS.

STRONGLY AGREE							STRONGLY DISAGREE
1	2%	2%	7%	13%	8%	34%	33%
			UNCERTAIN - NEUTRAL				

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3. THE TAXABLE WAGE BASE SHOULD BE INCREASED TO HELP FINANCE SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT PAYMENTS.

STRONGLY AGREE							STRONGLY DISAGREE
1	5%	8%	17%	9%	10%	26%	24%
			UNCERTAIN - NEUTRAL				

Table 4.

Attitudes Toward Social Security Program Changes, 1979 Hart National Survey (N=1549).

	HIGHER TAXES	LOWER BENEFITS	SOME OF BOTH (Volunteered)	NOT SURE
Choice between higher Social Security taxes or lower retirement benefits	63%	15%	9%	13%

	STRONGLY FAVOR	MILDLY FAVOR	MILDLY OPPOSE	STRONGLY OPPOSE	NOT SURE
Raising the age for full retirement benefits from 65 to 68 and raising the age for early benefits from 62 to 65	15%	21%	17%	34%	13%

Table 5.

Comparison of Social Security Alternatives for Nebraska Respondents in the 1982 NASIS and 1982 Bereuter Polls.

	STRONGLY FAVOR	MILDLY FAVOR	MILDLY OPPOSE	STRONGLY OPPOSE	NOT SURE
1982 NASIS					
Increase Social Security taxes	10.7	25.0	25.2	34.5	4.6
Lower Social Security benefits instead of increasing taxes	6.6	15.8	26.0	45.6	6.0
Raise the age of retirement benefits instead of increasing taxes (from 65 to 68 years)	15.6	22.7	20.2	38.7	2.7

	YES	NO
1982 Bereuter		
Increase Social Security taxes	28.0	72.0
Raise the retirement age for future recipients	50.0	50.0

Table 6.

Percent Respondents Who Favor or Oppose Ending the Social Security System.

	1982 NASIS (N = 949)	1979 HART (N = 1849)
Strongly Favor Ending the Program	3.5	12.0
Mildly Favor Ending the Program	5.1	5.0
Mildly Oppose Ending the Program	12.5	9.0
Strongly Oppose Ending the Program	75.6	67.0
Not Sure	2.8	7.0

1977 ELRED Study

The Social Security Program should be abolished.

STRONGLY AGREE				UNCERTAIN - NEUTRAL				STRONGLY DISAGREE
18%	16%	2%	2%	14%	18%	30%		

Table 7.

Confidence That the System Will Have Funds to Provide Retirement Benefits for Respondent and Spouse.

	1982 NASIS			1979 HART		
	UNDER 65 YEARS (N=801)	OVER 65 YEARS (N=121)	TOTAL SAMPLE (N=940)	NON-RETIRED (N=1151)	RETIRED (N=434)	TOTAL SAMPLE (N=1549)
Complete Confidence	1.9	33.0	6.0	10.0	42.0	18.0
A Great Deal of Confidence	10.2	30.6	12.6	22.0	31.0	24.0
Only A Little Confidence	55.7	32.2	51.8	41.0	16.0	31.0
NOT SURE	--	--	1.8	6.0	8.0	6.0

Table 8.

Respondent Choice to Participate in the Social Security Program.

	1982 NASIS (N = 948)	1979 HART (N = 1549)
Choose to be in the Social Security system and pay taxes	63.3%	77.0%
Choose to get out of the system and not pay taxes	33.8	19.0
UNCERTAIN	3.0	4.0

1977 ELRED

If given the option, I would withdraw from Social Security and take a refund of all the Social Security taxes that may employers and I have paid.

STRONGLY AGREE																STRONGLY DISAGREE
	1	22%	1	14%	1	5%	1	2%	1	14%	1	15%	1	28%	1	

UNCERTAIN - NEUTRAL

List of reports already released using data gathered in the 1982 Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey. These may be purchased at the indicated price from the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Report Number	Title
1.	Designs, Procedures, Instruments and Forms for the 1982 NASIS. Helen A. Moore. Price: $7.50.

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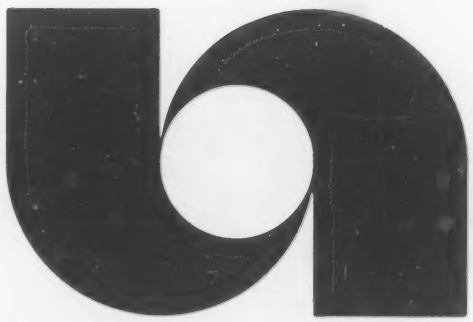
NASIS

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND HIGHER EDUCATION



NEBRASKA ANNUAL SOCIAL INDICATORS SURVEY

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NASIS-82, #3

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Community Colleges and Higher Education

The community college system sprang from the mid-West image of an expanding educational frontier. In 1901, Joilet Junior College opened in Illinois with the intent of extending secondary education and providing innovative educational programs to a rapidly growing population. Throughout the last two decades enrollment in these programs has grown enormously. They have also taken myriad shapes and functions as local residents, educators, and administrators have sought to develop programs designed to meet post-secondary educational needs at the community level.

Unlike four-year colleges, the purposes of community and junior colleges has been more diverse. In many states, a separate two-year vocational degree program is the primary function of community colleges. Often these programs are not intended as liberal arts or transfer programs. In other states, however, the community colleges provide an opportunity for "late blooming" students to improve their academic preparation and prove their ability to succeed in higher education. This "transfer" function of the community college sets up "feeder" programs into four-year state colleges and universities.

In the State of Nebraska, six community colleges serve residents with vocational, liberal arts and recreational courses. Historically, the emphasis has remained on occupational and technical training, as indicated by the title "Technical Community Colleges." However, since 1975, a shift has occurred in the percentage of degrees and awards presented by these community colleges. In 1974-1975, over 83 percent of all awards were science, engineering or business and commerce areas. In 1979-1980, that figure dropped to 78 percent of awards. Thus, liberal arts and public service degrees and awards have increased from 16 percent to 21 percent of the total, an increase of over one-fourth. This suggests that the utilization of community colleges in Nebraska may be shifting.

With rising educational costs and increased demand for college education by employers, many students have turned to community colleges for transfer and/or recreational purposes, even though that is not the primary mission of the institution. To what extent do Nebraskans use community colleges for vocational, transfer, and recreation purposes? How much support do Nebraskans extend to each of these functions? This report focuses on these questions as they were asked of a 1982 representative sample of the state population through the Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey.

Utilization of Community Colleges

Of the 1906 respondents in the survey, a total of 192 (10.1 percent) indicated that they had attended a course at a community college in Nebraska during the preceding year. According to Nebraska State Education Commission statistics, approximately 23,000 Nebraskans attended Community Colleges in 1981-1982.[1] We measured the extent to which our respondents use the community colleges, and whether they are working toward a degree. The two questions we asked of those taking courses were:

1. During the past year, how many courses have you taken at a community college or junior college in the State of Nebraska?

One	48.9%
Two or Three	25.5%
Four or More	25.6%

2. Do you intend to complete an associate degree or program certificate at a community college?

Yes	35.4%
No	64.6%

These answers suggest that Nebraskans use the community colleges for different reasons. Close to two-thirds of those attending do not currently

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[1] Fall Head Count Enrollments in Nebraska Institutions of Post-Secondary Education: 1977 through 1981. Nebraska Coordinating Council for Post-Secondary Education. July, 1982.

intend to complete a degree or program certificate. In addition, many students attend on a part-time basis, with close to three-fourths of the students taking three or fewer courses per year.

We next examined the types of courses in which these respondents actually enrolled. The results in Table 1 indicate that the majority of students (61.5 percent) used community colleges to obtain a vocational education. This reflects an interest in improving job skills directly related to employment. A smaller proportion (20.8 percent) attended hobby or recreation classes, and the smallest attendance was in liberal arts courses (12.0 percent). A total of 5.7 percent of respondents took a combination of courses.

We also found some important differences in the characteristics of students that were enrolled in these classes. For example, men and women use the community colleges at different rates (82 males and 110 females) and for different purposes. A majority of both men and women took primarily vocational courses at the community colleges, but this trend was substantially stronger among males. Women were more likely than men to be enrolled in hobby and recreation classes and more than twice as likely to take liberal arts courses.

Age is also a factor in course enrollments. Each of the three age groups examined were most likely to be enrolled in vocational programs. However, the vocational courses were selected at a greater rate by younger students (18 to 29 years of age). Respondents in the 30 to 49 year old age group were much more likely to be enrolled in liberal arts courses than these younger students, and the age 50 and over respondents were most likely of all age groups to be enrolled in the liberal arts courses. The hobby and recreation courses were used proportionately more often by the 30 to 49 year old age

group, and least likely to be used by the 50 and over age group. Both the age and sex characteristics of these respondents suggest that "non-traditional" students (women and older students) are most likely to enroll in the liberal arts courses, and somewhat less likely to take advantage of the traditional vocational programs of the community colleges.

Finally, we examined the use of the community colleges by rural and urban residence. Of those respondents who did enroll in classes, rural residents were the least likely to enroll in liberal arts courses, somewhat less likely than other Nebraskans to use the hobby and recreation courses, but were more likely to take a combination of classes or to focus on vocational programs exclusively. Urban residents (excluding Omaha) were more frequently enrolled in hobby and recreation courses and the least involved in vocational classes.

The Community College Mission

While utilization of the community college system is one indicator of support for varying programs, we also asked all respondents in the survey their opinion about the importance of community college education. All 1907 respondents were asked the following:

> The roles of community colleges have been expanding over the past few years, while tax dollars decrease. I would like to ask you what you think about the importance of keeping each of the following programs at community colleges in Nebraska. Do you think these are very important programs, somewhat important programs, or not important programs at all to keep operating?

Respondents were then asked their opinions about these programs separately: (1) Programs providing vocational and technical skills to students, (2) Hobby classes and recreation programs, (3) Liberal arts education programs, and (4) First and second year college programs that can be transferred to a four-year college or university.

The analysis in Table 2 indicates the percent of respondents who felt it was "very important" to maintain a particular program. Overall, the strongest support for programs was given to those which provide vocational and technical training, with approximately 80 percent of respondents indicating a "very important" rating. The transfer function of community college programs also received strong support from 70 percent of respondents as "very important". The liberal arts programs were rated as very important by over one-third of respondents and hobby/recreational courses were rated very important by less than one fifth of respondents. It should be noted that when ratings of "somewhat important" and "very important" were combined, Nebraska respondents indicated substantial support for the maintenance of each of these programs at a rate of 77 percent approval or greater.

More detailed examination of Table 2 suggests that trends in sex, age, and rural-urban differences in use of community colleges are reinforced by differing attitudes toward the specific programs. Notably, women respondents were significantly more supportive of liberal arts, hobby/recreation, and two-year transfer programs than men. Women were also more likely to utilize these programs. Among the age groups, few significant differences were evident. However, those respondents in the 70 year-and-older category were significantly less likely to support vocational and transfer programs. This may be due to the general under utilization of these programs by these respondents. Interestingly, hobby/recreation programs receive the greatest support for this age group, and significantly lower support from the 30 to 49 year-old age group. These findings quite likely reflect the fact that older students are less concerned with educational programs related to careers. They have more time and interest in hobby and recreation programs after retirement from full-time occupations.

Finally, some minor differences are evident among respondents from different resident categories. Nebraskans in rural, non-farm residences were least likely of all groups to support liberal arts programs, and significantly more likely to support hobby-recreation programs indicating that community colleges serve different purposes in rural areas. That is, the community colleges quite likely are a major resource for recreation/hobby activities in rural areas where fewer of these types of activities are found. In urban areas, resources other than community colleges provide community members with recreation/hobby activities.

Summary

From these responses, we can identify several major trends in respondent use and attitudes toward community colleges in the state.

1) Vocational-technical programs remain the highest demand function of the technical community colleges, particularly among younger students and males.

2) Among non-traditional students (older students and females) the utilization of liberal arts programs is much higher.

3) General support of all four components of community college functions (vocational, liberal arts, recreational and transfer) is high among Nebraskans. More than 70 percent agree that each area is somewhat important to maintain, even in the face of budget cuts.

4) Specific support of programs as "very important" highlights the vocational and two-year transfer programs of the community colleges as the most widely supported. The two-year transfer program receives its greatest support from younger respondents and from female respondents. Vocational programs receive across-the-board support from all groups in the state.

The technical community colleges show the greatest growth rate in enrollments of all post-secondary educational institutions in the state. Thus, an understanding of the current and future demands of both traditional and non-traditional students must be understood by policy makers and the residents of the state who support these programs through tax dollars.

These data suggest that the diverse needs of students, both young and old, male and female, traditional and non-traditional, require a flexible program that incorporates several different educational functions beyond the original technical-occupational emphasis.